

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes May 3, 2005

The Edgefield County Council held its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 P. M. Tuesday, May 3, 2005, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter Street, Edgefield.

Members present

C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman
Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman
Norman Dorn, Councilman
Joel D. Hudson, Councilman
B. Everette Kitchens, Councilman

Others present

Wayne Adams, County Administrator
John F. Byrd, Jr., County Attorney
Margaret Harling, Finance Director
Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council
and others as per list attached

Chairman Kneece called the meeting to order and the invocation was given by Councilman Hudson. After the invocation, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilman Kitchens , to approve the April 5, 2005, Edgefield County Council Minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports

Monthly financial reports by department for the month of March, 2005.

Minutes of the following meetings:

EC Planning Commission.....3/10/05
EC Hospital Board of Trustees.....3/28/05

Communication of Planning Commission's approval of a re-zoning request (Intersection of Martintown and Murrah Roads).

Newspaper article mentioning the sale of used Mack trucks at recent J. M. Wood auction, West Columbia.

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Regarding the report concerning the re-zoning request at the intersection of Martintown and Murrah Roads, Councilman Hudson moved that council not further consider the re-zoning of the property at the corner of Martintown and Murrah Roads as requested by the Planning Commission in its letter dated April 21, 2005. Seconded by Councilman Kitchens. Motion carried.

Public Hearings

Public Hearings were held on the following ordinances to receive written and/or oral comments from the public:

Ordinance No. 04-05-560, "An Ordinance Providing for the FY 2005-06 Edgefield County General Operating Budget."

Ordinance No. 04-05-557, "An Ordinance Enacted Jointly by the County of Edgefield and Certain Incorporated Municipalities within Edgefield County to Affirm their Continued Commitment to a Centralized Countywide Recreation Program, and to Establish Terms, Conditions, Procedures, and Other Provisions Pertaining to the Program's Operation."

Ordinance No. 04-05-558, "An Ordinance to Establish a Fifteen-Dollar Per Vehicle Road Maintenance Fee on All Motorized Vehicles Registered in EC, to Provide for the Collection and Expenditure of Revenue from Said Fee, and for Other Matters Relating Thereto."

Ordinance No. 04-05-559, "An Ordinance Establishing New Charges for the Issuance of Construction Permits, Based on Square Footage Considerations."

There being no comments, written or oral, on any of these ordinances, the public hearing session closed and the Chairman continued with the regular meeting.

Ordinances

Councilman Bright made the motion to approve second reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-560, "An Ordinance Providing for the FY 2005-06 Edgefield County General Operating Budget." The motion was seconded by Councilman Hudson and the motion carried unanimously.

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The second reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-557, "An Ordinance Enacted Jointly by the County of Edgefield and Certain Incorporated Municipalities within Edgefield County to Affirm their Continued Commitment to a Centralized Countywide Recreation Program, and to Establish Terms, Conditions, Procedures, and Other Provisions Pertaining to the Program's Operation," was approved unanimously by Council with a motion made by Councilman Kitchens and seconded by Councilman Hudson.

Councilman Dorn asked the Chairman to allow him to comment on second reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-558, "An Ordinance to Establish a Fifteen-Dollar Per Vehicle Road Maintenance Fee on All Motorized Vehicles Registered in Edgefield County, to Provide for the Collection and Expenditure of Revenue from Said Fee, and for Other Matters Relating Thereto."

"My point being is that I hear a lot of people seem to think that \$15.00 is just too much money to be paying in addition to the license plate itself -- also, the opinion as well that maybe some of the equipment to be purchased may be a little expensive, that it possibly could be gotten at a better price. I don't want to make it sound threatening or so, but if we don't get some type of consideration on that I am going to try to maybe let's do a referendum and get the whole thing taken off and start all over again.

I think if we look for monies that maybe aren't available, for example, I tried to explain last time about miscellaneous budget or fees that have, I think, \$185,000 in it. With \$185,000, I am not sure, Mr. Adams, what we use that money for in terms of what? We discussed this another time that we have \$883,000 that was brought forward from the last budget. I believe it was, and my understanding on that was that, we call that reserve, this money is available in case we go broke. Mr. Adams, is this around three months and how many days of reserve?" Mr. Adams: "This would be at a three month fund balance (reserves) with the adoption of this budget. Mr. Dorn: "My question though is that three months and one day or three months and five days. Believe it is more than three months." Mr. Adams stated reserve levels were benchmarked to the last reporting period (June 30, 2004 audit) but the figure I am giving you at three months is projected based on what we would use to fund this budget that council just had second reading on. That (balance brought forward) is the amount that would have been added to fund balance had we not used it the prior year, and this is the sum of the over collections to budget in the under expenditures to budget was \$860,776.00."

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Councilman Dorn said he thought the numbers given for a three axle were in the range of \$114,000. Mr. Adams said that \$100,000 was budgeted for the purchase, amortized over a period of seven years on a lease purchase for a dump truck (estimated at \$100,000). There is a news article included in the agenda from the auction in West Columbia where several of these trucks (used trucks) were sold for \$95,000.00. But, said Mr. Dorn, "Mr. Adams, I don't think you could have the Columbia numbers included because it has not been too long since this has been discussed. Mr. Adams: "No, we are just saying that they support what staff estimated for the budget." Mr. Dorn said he understood it was \$85,000.00, but Mr. Adams said \$100,000 was budgeted and if the machinery equipment comes in under budget it just means more would be available to fund the operations of the road department. This is a \$503,000 annual budget and the road fee would bring in \$270,000.00, a little more than half.

Councilman Dorn: "I think you have also in the budget for a motor grader. Do you have a driver for it – a qualified driver?" Mr. Adams stated that we have a position open at this time. Mr. Dorn: "Qualified driver, yes or no." Mr. Adams said he considers them qualified. Mr. Dorn said he is either qualified or not. Mr. Adams stated again he considers them qualified, so Mr. Dorn wanted to know what the qualifications are that makes Mr. Adams so sure the drivers are qualified. Mr. Dorn was understood the driver had to pass some type of test but that does not apply to a motor grader operator. So, Mr. Dorn stated that all he was trying to say was that he feels we can do better than this (\$15 fee)." This is not our money we are spending – this money belongs to the taxpayers and somebody needs to speak in their behalf to make sure that we are getting a \$1.00 for a \$1.00. I think this is outlandish. Last year we had a \$10.00 fee that expired after three years. Now you come back, and I guess these are your numbers, that we are going to charge \$15.00. That is not going to work." The administrator said that nothing had changed from the original draft, and that no opposition was raised at first reading. Mr. Dorn said that he would not vote for it on second reading and asked that the record be clarified that he did not support it at first reading. Mr. Dorn stated he felt that with gas prices like they are and people traveling back and forth to out-of-town schools, such as USC-Aiken and Piedmont Tech, a \$15.00 does not make common sense.

Mr. Adams responded to the question asked by the chairman about the machinery to be purchased with the fee monies. "We propose to buy two pieces of equipment, that being the dump truck we talked about (estimated at \$100,000) and a motor grader that we have estimated at \$175,000.00. Those prices are based on recent experience. The debt would be amortized over a period of seven years at a cost of \$47,000 per year. The remainder of the revenue from the fee proceeds would go to offset operating costs of the road maintenance budget."

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Councilman Hudson: "We all have our opinion and I guess there are times when we should say whether we are for or against something, but putting the \$15 fee on vehicles is that not going to bring down the price that the people who own property are going to pay. Also, people who are using the roads, everyone – whether they own or rent a house, everybody uses the roads – is going to be paying part of the taxes. That is the way I see it. Is that not right?" "Yes, said Mr. Adams. That is part of the reason that staff was asked to recommend a three plus mill reduction in the property tax millage." Mr. Hudson said that he did want to make sure that we spend the money in getting the best deal we can on the equipment.

Chairman Kneece asked for a motion. The motion to approve second reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-558 was made by Councilman Hudson, seconded by Councilman Kitchens. Councilman Dorn asked that the record show this time he did not vote for second reading. Motion carried with four yeas and Councilman Dorn opposing.

Motion was made by Councilman Kitchens, seconded by Councilman Hudson, to approve second reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-559, "An Ordinance Establishing New Charges for the Issuance of Construction Permits, Based on Square Footage Considerations." Motion carried unanimously.

The third and final reading of Ordinance No. 02-03-433, "An Ordinance Providing for a Lease and Agreement between Edgefield County and Plane Fun, Inc., Whereby the Latter Shall Lease the Premises of the Trenton Airport and Serve as the Airport's Fixed Base Operator and Airport Manager," was approved unanimously with a motion made by Councilman Kitchens, seconded by Councilman Hudson.

First reading of Ordinance No. 04-05-562, "An Ordinance Providing for the Conveyance of a Land Parcel of Edgefield County to Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, a Non-Profit Organization, for the Assemblage of Property to Its Cemetery" was approved by a motion made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by Councilman Bright. Motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Veterans Affairs Update

Mr. John Rikard, Veterans Affairs Officer, thanked council for allowing him to appear before them. Mr. Rikard told council that this past year, 2004, Veterans Affairs picked up another one million dollars in benefits for veterans, widows and children in this area. This puts about thirteen million dollars coming through this office now. About sixty-seven (67) percent of that goes into money for pensions and for compensations, the rest for services in other areas. This year since January 1st he has filled out fifty four (54) new claims and this is double what has been done in the past. The National Guard coming in has really given a big kick and the VA has really worked with them. Also, his office is

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working with three things: (1) Veterans Day program for November 5th. The speaker will be Lt. Gen. Livingston – a three-star general, US Marine Corp, Retired – and a Congressional Medal of Honor winner; (2) A memorial service will be held on the square on the 30th of this month – a wreath-laying ceremony – at 11:00 a.m.; (3) At the end of last month a plan was submitted for a Veterans Memorial Park and they asked for a \$20,000 grant.

Funding Requests

Councilman Hudson made a motion to approve \$1,000 for the Edgefield County Veterans Day Celebration 2005, seconded by Councilman Bright. Motion carried unanimously. This funding was the same as for 2004.

Motion made by Councilman Hudson, seconded by Councilman Bright, to approve a one-half page ad for \$55 for the Peach Festival Program. Motion carried unanimously.

Reappointment to Piedmont Technical Board

At the request of Dr. Lex Walters, President of Piedmont Technical College, County Council approved the recommendation of the re-appointment of Mrs. Jane J. Herlong to the Piedmont Technical College Board. This recommendation will be sent to the local delegation for approval and then to the Governor for the appointment. Motion was made by Councilman Kitchens, seconded by Councilman Dorn, to approve Dr. Walters' request for the re-appointment of Mrs. Jane J. Herlong to the Piedmont Technical Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Edgefield County Council August Meeting Date

Due to the SCAC Conference being held in August at the same time as the regular meeting of Council, it was discussed to change the August 2nd council meeting to Tuesday, August 9th. Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilman Hudson, to approve this change. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Ms. Sandra Curry addressed council concerning the need for a traffic light at the intersection of Highway 25 and Bettis Academy Road. She apologized for being so persistent on this issue, and stated she has talked with several offices on this issue (Greenwood, Edgefield, Columbia) but feels he has received no satisfactory information. Ms. Curry stated she is being told that the accidents that have happened there were rear-end accidents and said that this was not true. She has witnessed many of those accidents. The Administrator will contact Mr. Phillip Brooks' supervisor concerning this matter and Ms. Curry will contact Sen. Moore and Rep. Bill Clyburn.

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Guests

Linny Birt of the Merriwether section (Plantation Point) of Edgefield County, addressed council opposing the proposed re-zoning of an area in Merriwether from residential to commercial and urged the council to vote against the re-zoning.

Jay Lacy spoke. "I didn't quite catch the vote in the beginning but now that you reiterated the vote, I guess, for the public what does that mean? The vote was no. So, you are going against what the Planning Commission kind of sees as a good thing for our county. The discussions of this council for months has been money, tax, service fees, whatever you want to call it. You need more tax dollars and this – it is not a Merriwether-Edgefield situation – it is a county situation. We have almost 12,000 people in the Merriwether community and I can assure you I am involved in what goes on in Merriwether and I don't think any (council member) – I have not seen any council member at any of the meetings that have involved Merriwether, in trying to plan for growth in our area. We need neighborhood services. We need LCI; LCII; LCIII (zoning districts). We don't need just a straight commercial-type situation. I have been working with this for over two years and if it took a referendum for a vote for our area to determine what they want I am positive it would be 'yes.' I had a call this morning from a doctor looking to place an office in that area just because the newspaper article from the Planning Commission, and then it comes up here and there is no discussion, no hearing, no nothing – you just say 'no.' I would not want this neighborhood service area to become another high school issue, because Edgefield County did not want a high school in Merriwether. Merriwether has Fox Creek High School. Thank you.

No executive session.

Claims approved as follows:

A.	PAYROLL	3/28/05 thru 4/10/05	
	Regular.....		\$170,093.87
B.	PAYROLL	4/11/05 thru 4/24/05	
	Regular.....		\$167,636.11
	General Operating.....		\$766,892.01

There being no further business, Councilman Dorn made the motion to adjourn. Second by Councilman Hudson. A budget work session is scheduled for May 17th and the next regular meeting of council is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7, 2005.

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ATTEST

Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council

